

**A Blueprint for Implementing Evidence-Based
Alcohol Prevention Policy and Programs
in the Collegiate Environment**

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A Blueprint for Implementing Evidence-Based Alcohol Prevention Policy and Programs in the Collegiate Environment

This blueprint for implementing evidence-based policy and programs in the higher education arena is organized to allow practitioners to:

- Build familiarity with environmental and individual risk factors specific to the higher education environment.
- Build familiarity with principles of evidence-based practice for alcohol and other drug prevention in higher education.
- Build familiarity with programs that have been assessed to show effectiveness in the college context.
- Connect possible policy adoption to risk factors.
- Articulate a process for adopting evidence-based strategies for alcohol prevention in higher education.

High-risk drinking in the collegiate environment is a pressing public health and legal concern for institutions of higher education. For professionals who are involved daily with preventing high-risk consumption, finding effective tools to deal with student alcohol use is a great challenge. Working with limited resources only makes the challenge of meeting student and campus needs a greater challenge. This blueprint strives to describe a means to reduce high-risk drinking on college campuses through a multifaceted approach that targets known risk factors, evidence-based programs, and prudent policy implementation.

Reducing high-risk drinking on college campuses involves implementing a multifaceted approach that targets known risk factors through evidence-based programs and prudent policy implementation.

This blueprint is based on the premise that resources must be allocated with the reality that prevention professionals have limited time, energy and fiscal allocation. Allocation of resources should be made based upon an evidence-based framework. The process suggested here asks prevention professionals to first identify what specific risk factors they have in their campus environment. By understanding specific campus risks, prevention strategies can be adopted that directly target individuals engaged in risky behaviors.

The effective addressing of campus needs is built upon the 3-in-1 framework recently proposed by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism in *A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges*. The 3-in-1 framework is a multi-faceted approach that involves employing evidence-based strategies for at-risk individuals, the student population as a whole, and for the community in which a college or university is situated. Employing this framework means being aware of the evidence of good practice outlined in the following pages.



Risk Factors for Increased Alcohol Consumption of College Students

The following table provides a list of factors that have been shown to increase the risk of college student alcohol use. A prevention approach would suggest either trying to change the risk factor or trying to focus services to minimize the impact of risk factors in the college environment.

Campus/Environment	
Group affiliations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greek membership • Participation in intercollegiate athletics
Leadership positions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holding two or more leadership positions at the same time
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-campus residential housing • Greek housing
Access to alcohol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased availability of alcohol • Lower price of alcohol • Large parties • Peer usage
Students in transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First-year status • New students to specific campus environment
Media exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased exposure to alcohol advertising
Individual	
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men have traditionally been at greater risk (the gap is narrowing)
Self regulation skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower self refusal and control skills
Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower ability to cope with stress
Personality traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher sensation-seeking behavior
Attitudes toward alcohol consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher positive expectancy of alcohol consumption
Beliefs towards alcohol consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inaccurately high perception of peer consumption
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General decline in problem behavior with age of student
History of problem behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Past alcohol consumption • Past involvement in delinquent behavior



Protective Factors that Help to Limit Increased Alcohol Consumption Among College Students

The following table displays factors that help to limit alcohol consumption among college students. These factors do not change behavior, but function to prevent the initiation or increase of consumption of alcohol in the college environment. A prevention approach would suggest that the factors be enhanced in the college environment.

Campus/Environment	
Group affiliations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Religious groups
Campus Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased volunteer service• High academic engagement
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Substance-free housing



Principles of Evidence-Based Educational Programs

Identify campus risk factors through archived data, environmental scanning, and personal knowledge.

Select specific risks to address through educational programs.

Select educational programs that address the risk factor you are working to diminish. An awareness of programs that have shown efficacy in the college environment is at the core of selecting an appropriate program.

Developing a multi-faceted approach (3-in-1) is an essential part of implementing effective prevention of high risk consumption.

Pay specific attention to the dosage and reach of your educational efforts. Dosage refers to the contact time a program will have with participants. Reach indicates how much of the target population will actually receive the desired dosage.

Choose educational efforts that are developmentally appropriate for college students (including both content and sophistication with which they are delivered).

Limit time spent on single time events, fear appeals, car crashes, speaker testimonials, panel discussions, and awareness/knowledge-based programming.

Multiple points of contact are preferable to single occurrence events; this refers specifically to dosage of the program.

Focus on reducing risk factors and enhancing protective factors in the environment. Articulating how your planned program will function (program theory), as well as your intended outcomes, is an essential part of implementing effective programs.

On-going evaluation of both alcohol consumption and your programmatic efforts to prevent alcohol abuse are required to assess progress in alcohol abuse prevention.



Individual Programs with Significant Evidence of Success

The following four programs have been evaluated in multiple settings and repeatedly shown to have positive impact on changing attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors as they relate to college student alcohol consumption. These programs have significant evidence that replication will likely result in similar positive impact on students in the college environment.

Program #1: *Screening and Motivational Interviewing*

Screening and motivational interviewing was tested in the college setting at the University of Washington. This program involves screening students for their behavior as it relates to alcohol use and abuse. Those students who are heavy drinkers as defined by the scored screening instrument are then involved in a one-on-one meeting with a university representative. The meeting with high-risk drinkers involves a non-confrontational approach. Motivational interviews, the term for follow-up meetings with students, discuss life planning and how alcohol fits into life plans.

Assessment of screening and motivational interviewing conducted over a four year period at the University of Washington found that individuals who engaged in motivational interviewing after screening drank less than similar students who did not engage in motivational interviewing.

Program #2: *Cognitive Behavior Intervention*

Cognitive behavioral intervention is a group-based approach to training students to think differently about alcohol consumption (cognitive) and to acquire new skills (behavior) to reduce risk for high-risk consumption. Rethinking alcohol use means trying to shift attitudes and beliefs related to the use of alcohol, such as perceptions of benefits of alcohol consumption (positive expectancy), perceptions of peer use of alcohol, and attitudes toward peer dynamics associated with alcohol use. Once beliefs and attitudes have been challenged and the student expresses some willingness to change behavior, then appropriate skills can be acquired to help further reduce risk and consequences of alcohol use. Skills for development include social skills associated with drink refusal, peer intervention with friends, and pacing.

Cognitive behavior group-based interventions have been widely tested with adolescents in relationship to substance abuse and violence prevention. Adaptations of cognitive behavior interventions in the college environment have also shown evidence of effectiveness, but are limited by the structure of delivery. Traditionally, cognitive behavior programs with adolescents have been multiple-session programs delivered through a classroom-based format. This format is not seamlessly available in the college environment, so venues for delivery of multiple-session programs must be creatively developed.



Individual Programs with Significant Evidence of Success

Program #3: *Social Norms*

Social norm programs involve shifting behavior through making changes in attitudes and beliefs associated with the alcohol use of college students. Research generally indicates that college students have misperceptions as to the volume of alcohol consumption and its impact on behavior. The social norm program is intended to align student attitudes and beliefs with a more accurate view of student alcohol consumption. Social norm program efforts can occur in the context of a cognitive behavior program or in the form of a social marketing format. Social norm messages delivered as part of a group-based process have shown particular efficacy.

Social marketing of social norm messages involves utilizing student consumption information in advertising campaigns in an effort to shift common beliefs about alcohol use among students. Typically a social norms message would report how most students are responsible users of alcohol. Social marketing of social norm messages to a broad audience of students in the college environment is an approach that has particular appeal for its ability to reach a broad population. However, this form of social norm programming has a more limited level of evidence in actually changing student behavior.

Program #4: *Interactive Computer Software (Alcohol 101)*

Alcohol 101 is CD-ROM software that contains prevention messages related to college students. The software is a delivery mechanism that includes cognitive behavior and social norming strategies as part of the content message. Alcohol 101 is filled with over 2 hours of context material including a virtual drinking bar, three interactive video scenes, and lots of alcohol-related information. The strength of evaluated uses of this software is in changing student attitudes and beliefs, but it has not shown repeated measures of behavior change among college students. Alcohol 101 has nonetheless proven valuable in demonstrating the use of technology as a delivery mechanism for prevention messages in the college environment.



Connecting Risk Factors and Evidence-Based Programs: Programs with Significant Evidence of Success

The four programs described can each be utilized to mitigate certain risk factors for alcohol use in the college context. The following table makes a visual connection between programs and potential individuals to target, based upon the risk factors confronting students.

	Screening and Motivational Interviewing	Cognitive Behavior Intervention	Social Norms	Interactive Computer Software
Campus/Environment				
Group affiliations	✓		✓	✓
Leadership positions	✓	✓	✓	✓
Access to alcohol		✓		✓
Students in transition	✓	✓	✓	✓
Media exposure		✓	✓	
Individual				
Gender	✓		✓	✓
Self regulation skills		✓	✓	✓
Stress		✓	✓	
Personality traits	✓	✓		
Attitudes toward alcohol consumption	✓	✓	✓	✓
Beliefs toward alcohol consumption	✓	✓	✓	✓
Age		✓		
History of problem behavior	✓			



Programs with Some Evidence of Success

Part of the process of finding out what works in the college environment is the testing of new ideas. The following programs have been evaluated in the college context and shown some effectiveness. However, these programs have had limited implementation and evaluation, so it is difficult to predict their effectiveness in new environments. These programs represent promising ideas for program development, but also programs in need of refinement and further study to make a stronger statement of effectiveness.

Program #5: *Screening and Motivational Feedback via Mail*

Normative feedback by mail, comparing students' self reported drinking behavior (during the previous 60 days) with the U.S. gender-specific population norms. The feedback also includes computer-generated blood alcohol concentration levels, and estimated risk of alcohol-related problems.

Program #6: *Expectancy Challenge*

Students tend to hold positive expectancies about alcohol consumption, so the Expectancy Challenge provides an opportunity to counter their beliefs. In this type of program, participants are given either alcohol or placebo beverages in a controlled setting, followed by efforts to identify who had consumed alcohol, based on their behavior in social context.

Program #7: *Peer Oriented: "Pluralistic Ignorance"*

Peer discussion of perception that other students' comfort level with alcohol use is higher than their own comfort level with student drinking, followed by social factors responsible for this "pluralistic ignorance" phenomenon.

Program #8: *Second-Hand Effects*

Changing attitudes and beliefs about acceptability of alcohol consumption on those surrounding heavy consumers in the university environment.

Program #9: *Motivational Approach*

Multimode approach using self-regulation messages through media, policy, education, and referral services.



Connecting Risk Factors and Evidence-Based Programs: Programs with Some Evidence of Success

Programs #5–9 can each be utilized to mitigate certain risk factors for alcohol use in the college context. The following table makes a visual connection between programs and potential individuals to target based upon the risk factors confronting students.

	Motivational Feedback via mail	Expectancy Challenge	Peer Oriented “Pluralistic Ignorance”	Second-Hand Effects	Motivational Approach
Campus/Environment					
Group affiliations		✓	✓	✓	✓
Leadership positions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Access to alcohol					✓
Students in transition	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Media exposure					✓
Individual					
Gender	✓				
Self regulation skills	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Stress					✓
Personality traits	✓	✓	✓		
Attitudes toward alcohol consumption		✓	✓	✓	✓
Beliefs toward alcohol consumption	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Age		✓			
History of problem behavior	✓				✓



Adopting Policies that Work

Implementation of programs that impact individual use of alcohol consumption is an extremely important part of a holistic approach to prevention of alcohol abuse in the college environment. A second step in a holistic approach is to examine campus-related policies that can prevent alcohol abuse. This brief overview of policies that have been evaluated in the college context is designed to show policy makers the evidence of effectiveness of policy approaches to limiting college student alcohol use.

It is important to note that policy adoption and effectiveness is tightly linked to the method of policy adoption and enforcement in a particular college context. This overview cannot fully articulate the pitfalls associated with the process of substance abuse policy adoption in the college context. For example, one element of adoption that plays a key role is student support for policy change. Institutions implementing major policy change without broad-based student support have met with significant student resistance in recent years.

Policy Approaches to Alcohol Abuse Prevention

Policy Approach 1: *Dry Campus*

In a national analysis, designation of campus property as a “dry” or alcohol-free zone is related to less alcohol consumption among students. However, attempts to transform “wet” campuses into alcohol-free zones have achieved mixed results, at best. Campuses that have been dry for years (or decades) may indeed be linked to lower alcohol consumption, but these campuses have generated a surrounding culture that is unique and very different from a wet campus implementing a alcohol-free zone. The dynamics are different, and very challenging to wet campuses considering a dry campus policy.

Policy Approach 2: *Specific Restrictions on Access to Alcohol*

Restriction of access to alcohol in the collegiate context has been proven to impact alcohol abuse. Examples of specific restrictions to access of alcohol include: banning alcohol at athletic events and pre-events, eliminating large quantities of alcohol at parties (kegs, etc.), limiting the number of liquor licenses surrounding a campus environment, and limiting the volume sale of alcohol from establishments. Recent findings associated with campus or city alcohol policy adoption has shown a very positive relationship between restricting access to alcohol and preventing alcohol consumption.



Adopting Policies that Work

Policy Approach 3: *Parental Notification*

Parental notification is a policy in which, under certain conditions, the college or university contacts parents to report their child's alcohol consumption. Conditions for parental notification include campus incidents that compromise the health or safety of the student or other students, violate campus policy, or violate local or state laws or statutes. The limited evaluation of this policy has been positive, but it is very difficult to make any general statements about the impact of parental notification until more is known about how institutions have chosen to implement it and evaluate its effectiveness.

Policy Approach 4: *Mandatory Treatment*

This policy approach involves mandatory screening, counseling, and referral services when students are involved in an alcohol-related incident on campus. This policy step has met with mixed results. Treatment for individuals associated with alcohol-related incidents has been positive, but student willingness to report their peers' alcohol use is called into question with mandatory treatment programs. Evidence is not clear on what the outcome of mandatory referral policies will be.

Policy Approach 5: *Limiting Alcohol Advertisement*

Increased exposure to alcohol advertising is a risk factor for increased consumption. Adoption of policies that limit alcohol advertising on the college campus is a specific strategy to reduce messages that encourage the use of alcohol. Limiting alcohol industry sponsorship of events, limiting campus posting associated with alcohol utilization/advertising, and limiting student newspaper advertising of alcohol sales, establishments, or drink specials are specific examples of policies limiting alcohol advertising.

Policy Approach 6: *Increase Alcohol Price*

Increased alcohol price is related to decreased use among adolescents and young adults. College student use of alcohol appears to be sensitive to pricing. Limiting special drink pricing or raising the price of alcohol through tax levies appears to be a means to increase price and reduce use.

Policy Approach 7: *Universal Prevention Education*

The implementation of universal prevention education is included as a policy initiative because of the significant organization and resources associated with broad-based delivery of education to all students. While broad-based alcohol education has not been specifically evaluated as a policy direction, the principle of prevention education holds strong potential for behavior change when programs are based upon sound theory and evidence of past effectiveness.




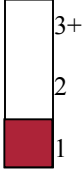

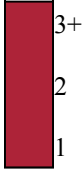

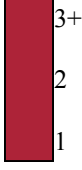

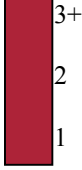
Risk Factors and Policy: What Should Policy Change Target?

The following table makes a visual connection between policies and risk factors they can potentially address.

	Dry Campus	Specific Restrictions on Access to Alcohol	Parental Notification	Mandatory Treatment	Limiting Alcohol Advertisement	Increase Alcohol Price	Universal Prevention Education
Campus/Environment							
Group affiliations		✓					✓
Leadership positions							✓
Access to alcohol	✓	✓				✓	
Students in transition			✓		✓		✓
Media exposure					✓		
Individual							
Gender							
Self regulation skills		✓					✓
Stress							✓
Personality traits							
Attitudes toward alcohol consumption							✓
Beliefs toward alcohol consumption							✓
Age							
History of problem behavior				✓			


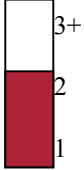

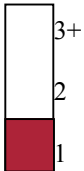

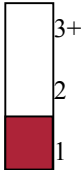




Appendix A: Description of Model and Promising Programs

	Target Population	Evaluation Methods	Results					Replications
			Pre	Post	1 year	2 year	4 year	
Screening and Motivational Interviewing								
Student screening for heavy use with follow-up interviews for high consumers of alcohol. Follow-up interview is non-threatening and positively oriented.	Assessed high-risk consumers Indicated Risk	Quasi-experimental						
Cognitive Behavior Intervention								
Group-based approach to train students to think differently about alcohol consumption, and then acquire social skills in drink refusal, peer intervention, and pacing.	Universal	Varied						
Social Norms								
Using education messages via presentation or media to correct perceptions of typical student alcohol consumption on campus (i.e., create more accurate perceptions of student use).	Universal	Varied						
Interactive Computer Software								
Computer software with user feedback on virtual consumption, social skills training, social norm messages and alcohol awareness information.	Universal	Quasi-experimental						


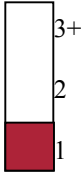


Appendix A: Description of Model and Promising Programs

	Target Population	Evaluation Methods	Results					Replications
			Pre	Post	1 year	2 year	4 year	
Screening and Motivational Feedback via Mail								
Normative feedback by mail, comparing students' self-reported drinking behavior with U.S. gender-specific norms, along with computer-generated blood alcohol concentration levels, and estimated risk of alcohol related problems.	Indicated Risk	Quasi-experimental						
Expectancy Challenge								
Participants are given either alcohol or placebo beverages in a controlled setting, followed by efforts to identify those who had consumed alcohol, based on their behavior in social context.	Universal	Quasi-experimental						
Peer Oriented: "Pluralistic Ignorance"								
Peer discussion of perception that other students' comfort level with alcohol use is higher than their own comfort level with student drinking, followed by discussion of social factors responsible for this "pluralistic ignorance."	Universal	Quasi-experimental						
Second-Hand Effects								
Changing the attitudes and beliefs about the acceptability of alcohol consumption with regard to those who surround heavy consumers in the university environment.	Universal	Quasi-experimental						



Appendix A: Description of Model and Promising Programs

	Target Population	Evaluation Methods	Results					Replications
			Pre	Post	1 year	2 year	4 year	
Motivational Approach								
Multimode approach using self regulation messages through media, policy, education, and referral services.	Universal	Case Study						



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